

# KOHL DJ's debate Disco music: blight or blessing?

By Nick Nulite

Let there be music, that's all we need! I don't remember who said it or which artist recorded it, but it's the basic premise behind everything we hear on the radio, at home on our stereos or while we're dancin' in the discos.

Music is the rhythm of life, it always has been and, hopefully, always will continue to be. As people in their respected societies change and evolve, so does their music, and what they enjoy listening to. That's just what's happening at the moment: a new and creative music form is upon us, and the industry has decided to label it DISCO.

Those who criticize and mock this new wave of music and the so-called mundane and uninspired philosophy that it projects, should look back about 20 years and interpret their feelings today, along with those of the critics of the '50s who said that rock and roll would not survive. They, too, said that this unusual and unprofessional music form lacked anything resembling talent and could do nothing more than upset your nervous system and rob your pocketbook.

Disco of today also is in its infancy stage, a babe, reaching and growing for its first time. As a musical expression, it is at its bare roots. The majority of disco tunes that we have been exposed to have come from unknown artists, who may or may not be around in another five years. Only in the last year have we seen accomplished and well known musicians begin to dabble with the constant, driving pattern called disco.

Groups like the Rolling Stones, Blondie, Rod Stewart, Dolly Parton and the Bee Gees, have all understood their public's need and desire for dance music. (If the Beatles were still together today, it would be safe to assume that people would already have danced on the disco floor to the selections of the mighty foursome.)

Many musicians have been hurt by the influx of discos as nightclubs, with some actually taking it as a personal attack on what they do for a living. But those who have been cynical—and out of work at the same time—have defeated their sole intention of what it is to be a musician, and that is to entertain.

As we move into the '80s and our attitudes and life styles adjust to the new decade, disco music will remain with us. You see, disco and its rhythm is nothing more than the heartbeat of our generation, a reflection of the way we all are living. The music, and what it stands for, will not change or vanish until the people it is being played for want or need a change.

It's people, all people, who make music what it is, and because people have the right to listen to what pleases them, then music, any form of music, should be there for their pleasure. After all, a million people a night across the country who like to dance can't be wrong.

*For several months, an intense and sometimes acrimonious debate has been raging behind the scenes at the campus radio station, KOHL [89.3 FM]. On one side are the forces of rock and roll, who view the increasing presence of disco on the station's playlist with alarm; pitted against them are those who feel disco is just as vibrant and valid as rock and resent the resistance to it.*

*Here for your perusal are both sides of the dispute, presented by representatives of each faction. Arguing for the pro is Nick Nulite [heard Wednesday afternoons from two to six] and taking the con view is Kevin Hoover [heard Friday nights from ten to one].*

By Kevin L. Hoover

One is on dangerous ground when criticizing any form of music, even when it is as monumentally pointless as disco. Music is, after all, a matter of individual preference which speaks to individuals in many different ways.

But when radio and popular culture are dominated by an incessant, mind-numbing drone of derivative ear pollution, such as disco represents, somebody has to speak up.

Disco represents the lowest form of music: an industrial by-product pandering to a consumption-oriented society.

Disco could never have developed spontaneously, as a valid and lasting vehicle for artistic expression, nor will it stand as such. The "songs" aren't crafted, but machined with all the frightening little tools science has made available.

Any musician could respect the high degree of instrumental tightness demanded by disco music, except that its range is so narrow as to render the instrumental parts almost interchangeable from song to song. Only the tempo is slightly variable, from fast to faster.

But then, the goal of disco isn't to bring out an artist's inspiration, but to meet proven market criteria. And the end result isn't an appeal to one's aesthetic sense, but a bite-sized chunk of programming, an inoffensive sonic backdrop to social interaction.

(Not that good dance music need be boring, meaningless, refined or even commercial—just look at the Sex Pistols.)

Given the prerequisites for any disco tune—clockwork drums, ornamental horns, assiduously vapid lyrics—it consistently comes off as a non-nutritive, predigested music product. The precision harmonies fall flat, the inviolable one-two beat becomes deadening, the redundant appeals to "get down" ring hollow and lifeless. Call it caffeinated elevator music.

In the larger sense, disco's near dominance of AM radio tends to exclude far superior but non-trendy music. Fledgling composers and musicians have to choose between churning out disco and driving a bus. Thus, innovation and creativity are stunted and the stagnant status quo perpetuates itself.

One positive conclusion can be drawn from the current state of affairs, however. Not only can music not sink any lower (until slugs begin composing), but historically, every modern musical revolution (the Beatles, Elvis, etc.) has been preceded by a "vacuum" period, such as we now are enduring. One has to hope that this is the disco-dominated darkness before the dawn.

